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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/573,214

03/24/2006

Ayako Nanjyo

F-8958

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EXAMINER

TREYGER, ILYA Y

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3761

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

10/09/2009

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.		Applicant(s)	
	10/573,214		NANJYO ET AL.	
	Examiner		Art Unit	
	ILYA Y. TREYGER		3761	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period **will** apply and **will** expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply **will**, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 March 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 2 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1 and 3-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 07/23/2009 has been entered.

2. Claims 1 and 3 are amended.
3. Claim 2 is canceled.
4. Claims 1 and 3-20 are examined on the merits.

Response to Arguments

5. The rejection of claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph is withdrawn based on Applicant's Remarks, pages 8-12.

6. Applicant's arguments filed 06/10/2009 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive:

7. With respect to claim 1, Applicant's argue that the Examiner's statement that the claims do not require a "distinct middle height portion" is incorrect because claim 1 recites "said absorbent body having a standard-height portion and a middle-height portion layered over said standard height portion" hence specifically requires the noted "middle height portion." J3e claim fiurther requires "said middle-height portion having opposing middle-height portion side edge steps and a constant middle-height portion thickness extending from one of said opposing

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middle-height portion side edge steps 10 another one" which further distinctly defines the "middle height portion" based on thickness and defining edges.

However, the separate description of portions does not preclude the portions from being physically integral that in the instant case has been supported by Applicant's Fig. 2 which is substantially identical to Fig. 2 of Shimoe.

8. Applicants further argue that a round shape does not teach a stepped configuration based upon abstract geometric principles.

However, the fact that any curved shape can be considered as composed of distinct elements (steps) belongs to the common knowledge in the art, and therefore and therefore, it would have been obvious to those skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the steps-shape of the absorbent core as an obvious design choice, and as such it does not impact the patentability of claim (MPEP 2144.03 (A-E)).

9. Applicants further argue that grooves with the equal height walls provide improved liquid retention in comparison with the grooves with different height walls as disclosed by the reference.

However, since the improvement of the liquid capacity has been physically defined by the smaller wall only, and therefore the fact if the walls are equal or different in height is the matter of an obvious design choice.

10. With respect to claim 4, Applicants argue that the Examiner rejects the claim based upon an improper reading of the Shimoe reference because the lines marked "W" has no bearing on the structural configuration of the Shimoe.

However, the Examiner did not state that lines marked "W" in Shimoe are folding lines. The Examiner stated that lines marked "W" in Shimoe are fully capable of being folding lines.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

11. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

12. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

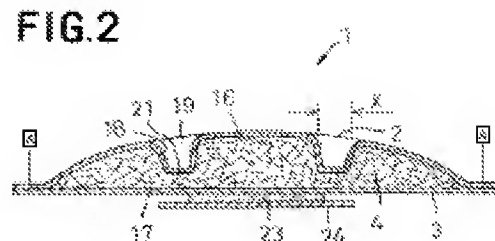
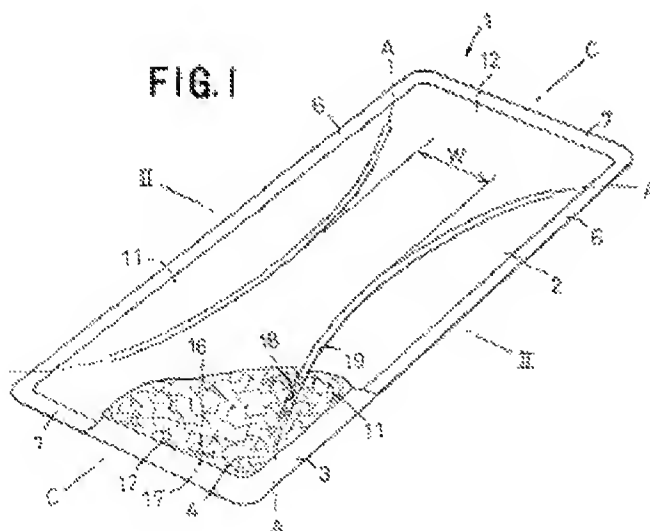
1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

13. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

14. Claims 1 and 3-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shimoe et al. (US 6,867,345) in view of JP 2003230593.

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15. In Re claims 1,3-4, 6, 10, 14, and 18, Shimoe discloses the sanitary napkin (absorbent article) 1 (Figs. 1 and 2) comprising a liquid-pervious topsheet 2 (Figs. 1 and 2), a liquid-impervious backsheet 3 (Figs. 1 and 2) and a liquid-absorbent core 4 (Figs. 1 and 2) disposed between the topsheet 2 and the backsheet 3 (Col. 3, ln. 3-6); the topsheet 2 is formed with a pair of second grooves (leakage preventing grooves) 19 depressed and curved in coincidence with the first grooves 18 (Col. 3, ln. 21-24; Figs. 1 and 2); wherein the leakage preventing grooves 19 (Fig. 2) are deeper than a thickness of the middle-height portion and reach the standard portion absorbent body (See Fig. 2); wherein the thinned portion A (Fig. 2) obtained by thinning the middle-height portion by press is formed on outsides of the leakage preventing grooves 19 (Fig. 2); wherein the middle-height portion is formed between front and rear lines W (Fig. 1) fully capable to be a folding lines for folding the absorbent article in three at the time of individual packaging; and wherein the thickness of the middle-height portion absorbent body is 1 to 15 mm (Col. 3, ln. 35, 36), what encompasses 1-3 mm as claimed (claims 6, 10, 14, and 18).



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Shimoe does not expressly disclose the absorbent article, comprising the absorbent body having opposing outer absorbent body edges extending in a longitudinal direction of the absorbent body; having a middle-height portion layered over the standard height portion, wherein the middle-height portion is in the form of the distinct step, and wherein the leakage preventing grooves comprise side walls equal in height.

JP 2003230593 teaches the absorbent article comprising the absorbent body having opposing outer absorbent body edges extending in a longitudinal direction of the absorbent body; having a middle-height portion layered over the standard height portion, wherein the middle-height portion is in the form of the distinct step, and wherein the leakage preventing grooves comprise side walls equal in height.

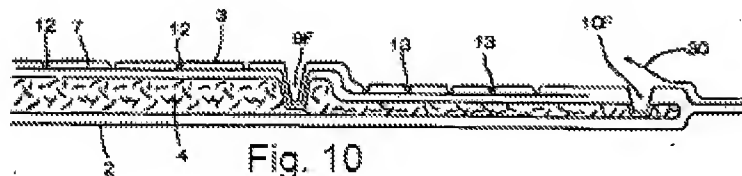


Fig. 10

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the absorbent body of Shimoe with the design, as taught by JP 2003230593 in order to employ the conventionally known variation of the absorbent body design.

16. In Re claims 5 and 13, Shimoe in view of JP 2003230593 disclose the invention discussed above, but do not expressly disclose the particular parameter of the absorbent body standard-height portion thickness range.

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The particular parameter of the of the absorbent body standard-height portion thickness range depends of the absorbent material has been used and affects the level of compactness while the article is being folded, and therefore is the matter of optimization as being result effective variable. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use the claimed parameter of the of the absorbent body standard-height portion thickness range in order to reach the desired level of compactness, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233(MPEP 2144.05 (II-A)).

17. In Re claims 7-9, 11, 12, 15-17, 19, and 20, Shimoe in view of JP 2003230593 disclose the invention discussed above, but do not expressly disclose the particular parameter of the leakage preventing grooves dimensions range.

The particular parameter of the leakage preventing grooves dimensions range affects the liquid capacity of the grooves and therefore is the matter of optimization as being result effective variable. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use the claimed parameter of the leakage preventing grooves dimensions range in order to reach desired liquid capacity of the grooves, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233(MPEP 2144.05 (II-A)).

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Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ILYA Y. TREYGER whose telephone number is (571)270-3217. The examiner can normally be reached on 7:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tatyana Zalukaeva can be reached on 571-272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Ilya Y Treyger/

Examiner, Art Unit 3761

/Tatyana Zalukaeva/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3761